(d) whether it is a fact that there has been no intensive R&D effort in this direction so far, if so, the corrective steps taken or proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT, ATOMIC ENERGY, ELECTRONICS AND SPACE (SHRI K. R. NARAYANAN): (a) No, Sir, the news item does not relate to any tissue culture facility set up by Govt. of India.

(b) and (c) The National Chemical Laboratory, Pune, under CSIR is having a Plant Tissue Culture Laboratory for multiplication of plantation crops and other plant species. The NCL group has so far produced several thousands plantlets/saplings in several species like eucalyptus, salvadore, pomegranate, tamarind, teak etc. These plantlets/saplings have already been transferred to the field for performance evaluation. The survival rate of the tissue culture produced plantlets has varied from species to species ranging between 60 to 80 per cent.

(d) Research on tissue culture of tree species has been in progress for over a decade in many research institutions in the country. The methods of propagating 100 year old teak (Tectona grandis) and 30 year old Eucalyptus citriodora at the National Chemical Laboratory (NCL), Pune, are the first successful in-vitro processes for the multiplication of mature forest trees. The transfer of tissue culture technology to the field is being studied at several centres; these include: National Bank of Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) project on eucalyptus, bamboo and salvadora at National Chemical Laboratory (NCL), Department of Biotechnology (DBT) project on bamboo at Delhi University and projects on sandal wood at Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) and Indian Institute of Science (IISc.). The Deptt. of Biotechnology has initiated action for the establishment of two pilot plant units one at National Chemical Laboratory, Pune and the other at Tata Energy Research Institute, New Delhi as national infrastructure to standardise the production of lakhs of plantlets of several important forestry species to be used in field trials by forest departments etc. The DBT, has further initiated support to several R&D projects for the development of tissue culture for the rapid multiplication Micro-propagatoin techniques on many of the nationally important forest tree species.

Setting up of new army posts at Astore sector of Siachen

1679. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the setting up of new army posts by Pakistan in the strategic Astore Sector of Siachen with superior telecommunication network in the region and better system of monitoring the movements of the Indian troops;

(b) whether it is a fact that at the flag meetings held during the last one year the demand for the withdrawal of Pakistani troops to previous position has been turned down; and

(c) if so, what measures have been taken by Government to meet the situation arising out of the military build-up by Pakistan in Siachen?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE PRODUCTION AND SUPPLIES IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI): (a) There is no reliable report about the establishment of any new Pak army posts along the Line of Control in Astore Sector of Pak Occupied Kashmir of improved communication network in this area.

(b) No such flag meetings have been held during the last one year.

(c) A close watch is kept on all developments having a bearing on our national security and appropriate measures are taken as necessary to ensure defence preparedness.